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thereby forfeit his title to bridewealth on the marriages of other sisters. Nevertheless, public opinion would censure a paternal uncle, or his son should he be dead, were he to refuse assistance, especially if, as is normally the case, they are living in the same or nearby homesteads. Paternal uncles are expected to help each of their nephews to marry in turn and to make a more generous contribution—perhaps two or three beasts at each marriage—than that looked for from the maternal uncle, for their nephews are their sons and are marrying wives to their lineage. The bulk of the bridewealth is provided by the family, but as the cattle of married brothers, though owned by them separately, are often herded together and tethered in the same kraal, the contributions by the father and his brothers may come from a single herd. Indeed, in a sense it is not easy to make a rigid distinction between what the father gives and what the uncles give towards the expenses of a marriage. The obligation on uncles is weightiest when they are full brothers of the father, live with or near him, and are on friendly terms with him. A half-brother of the father, especially if they live in different villages or districts, may feel that he has done all that should be required of him if he gives a beast on the marriage of one of his nephews. The younger brothers of the bridegroom must look for help to their other paternal half-uncles when it is their turn to marry.

The rivalry and conflict between paternal kin of which I have spoken comes out most clearly in relations between *gaatgwanlen*, male ortho-cousins, the sons of brothers, particularly of paternal half-brothers. Enmity between half-brothers is as far as possible suppressed, or at least not given public expression, on account of the father. If brothers disagree they separate, but they try to avoid scandal. Difference of generations inhibits either familiarity or declared hostility between a man and his paternal uncles, but the sons of these uncles are of his own generation and he can be as intimate or quarrelsome with them as he pleases. He is bound to them by ties of loyalty which do not derive from, or depend on, either mutual affection or common affection for a third person, as is the case with half-brothers who share the same father, and which generally necessitate close contact in situations likely sometimes to engender conflict. It is perhaps this contradiction between social bonds and personal feelings which gives rise to the joking or teasing relationship between ortho-cousins.

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I will not discuss here the use of obscene language in general among the Nuer but only the custom called *leng*, conventionalized exchange of obscenities, which is regarded as being pre-eminently a form of behaviour between paternal cousins of the same sex and generation, generally between males, whether they be first cousins or farther removed. It would be most improper for a man to exchange obscenities in this way with other kinsmen. A man says to a paternal cousin 'ban leng', 'let us have a slanging-game'. Then they abuse each other in turn, prefacing each epithet with the exclamation *owoi yah!* The exchange often develops into a contest to see which of the two can continue the longest without repeating himself. As Nuer are practised and have a fertile imagination in such matters, the duel may be kept up for several minutes before one of the men cannot think of an obscenity he has not already used and thus loses the duel, which is closed by shouts of laughter on both sides. The obscenities, which are the most extravagant I have ever heard, cover, with many elaborations, every possible kind of sexual act, the sodomy motif being the most prominent, and refer to the partners to the duel themselves and their fathers, mothers, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts and uncles, grandparents, and sweethearts, though only terms of relationship and not proper names are used. The partners also call one another Dinka, witches, spongers, bastards, gluttons, and so forth. No offence is taken at the foulest sexual references to relatives, though I was told that paternal first cousins ought to avoid mentioning the father and the paternal aunt—'you do not do this because of your father'—and to restrict their observations to the mother and persons on her side of the family. Paternal cousins farther removed appear to feel no embarrassment in mentioning the father and his sister. However, paternal cousins avoid such exchanges in the presence of unrelated persons of the opposite sex.

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The *wac*, father's sister, is not so prominent in the picture of family portraits as the father's brother because she is generally a member of a different local community, but Nuer say that she is like the father's brother: 'Your *wac* is your *gwasien* also.' She may treat you badly when you are little, and even if she is kind she does not love you: 'The ones she loves are her grandchildren and the children of her sisters.' A Nuer told me that 'she thinks of you merely as "*gademā*" ('son of my brother'), by which he meant that she does not think of you as '*gata*' ('my son'). She may talk

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he has disputes with his paternal kin or feels unhappy among them. I had the impression that Nuer, who often talk about it, are very conscious of this pull away from the paternal kin which is personified in the maternal uncle. It signifies not only a balance between paternal and maternal kin within the kinship system but also a balance between the lineage and the society which contains it—between the lineage system and the total social structure.

The relationship between the *gastnar*, the children of the mother's brother, and the *gastwac*, the children of the father's sister, who belong to different lineages and, usually, different local communities, is considered by Nuer to be one of easy companionship. Friendship between a man and the sons of his maternal uncle is not blended with the reserve which difference of generation introduces into his relationship with their father. However, the tension personified in the mother's brother cannot but to some extent affect the relationship with his sons. The sons of the mother's brother are the counterpart to the agnatic cousins, the sons of the father's brother, and the two relationships seem for Nuer to stand in opposition.

It remains to say a few words about the *manlen*, the mother's sister. Nuer say of her that she is like the mother's brother, that 'she is your mother', and that she will love you as a son. 'Your mother's sister is your friend. Is she not the sister of your mother?' If you live at her home she will not, like the father's sister, favour her own children at your expense. You are her son and you will eat with her own child and share and share alike with him like brothers. *When you visit her from a distance she sees that you are hungry from your journey and at once leaves off what she was doing to prepare a meal for you, and she pours her best butter over the porridge she has prepared for you. It is the mother's sister relationship that Nuer mostly invoke when hurling their spears in hunting and fishing: 'Tet cueda malene', 'My right hand, my mother's sisters.' This is equal to the moc, the invocation of a favourite ox. A mother's sister, like a father's sister, will be asked to contribute a heifer on the marriage of one of her nephews, but she, also, will not be expected to contribute again on the marriage of another son of the same sister. I was told that when a mother's sister dies her nephew may not visit her grave without a goat for sacrifice.*

The mother's sister-sister's son relationship belongs to the